

Towering search for elusive towering figures

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It was heart-wrenching to hear the Prime Minister's plea to the Malays not to waste any more time with useless activities. And this plea comes after almost 50 years of Merdeka.

It sounds unbelievable, but sad enough it is true, making the search for a towering personality, as Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi put it, rather elusive.

To be sure, it is not as though there is none among the Malay community. Only that the community itself is divided by so many vested interest groups or constrained by narrow "political correctness".

Base on divisive strategies, it pits one against the other and destroys anything in between, including the potential towering personalities.

Like all cultures, the Malay society too harbours negative traits that are bearing it down, best described by three acronyms: BA, MS and PHD.

The first stands for *berpura-pura* and *ampu-mengampu*, disguised as playing safe, for fear of rocking the boat. Thus, today, many choose just to go along with anything as long as they are assured of some kind of returns.

Few would want to take some hard stand, just in case they become unpopular and risk being an outcast when trying to be different.

Indeed, there are those who are quick to label people with diverse opinion as "unacceptable", to put it politely.

The preference is towards monolithic thinking of some sort where everyone scratches one another's back, while keeping a watchful eye that one's not outdone by the other.

The weaklings among the Malays love to do this, so much for creating towering personalities.

Next, the MS, *menunjuk-nunjuk* and *syok sendiri*. Here the tendency is to pretend to be important by hanging around someone really important, leading to a false sense of self-grandeur, or *syok sendiri*.

The idea is to be regularly noticed with those who wield influence and power, and the higher their position the better.

Otherwise one could be ostracised, or regarded as disloyal, even though he/she has perfectly valid reasons for not showing up.

Here again there are those with vested interest eager to point a finger, while subtly advancing themselves by rubbing shoulders with the VVIP and jockeying for favours at the expense of those more deserving.

In the course of the event, many potential towering personalities are cut out because they are too busy doing things that matter, rather than pretending to be busy and acting important.

The proverbial Malay with connections thrives on this strategy.

Finally, the infamous PHD — *pengkhianat*, *hasad*, *dengki*. When the rest fails, this killer strategy kicks in because of its ruthless impact fuelled by hatred and envy.

It could be as vicious as employing black magic or direct threat on whatever pretext. In fact, there are those who have no qualms hiring help for this purpose, including the so-called educated.

The idea is to finish off the competitor, more so a towering personality, as soon as possible through character assassination, malicious lies and wild rumour-mongering.

It does not matter if the good name of other people are also dragged through the mud as long as the ends are met.

Amalan berbudi bahasa and *nilai-nilai murni* have no meaning or place for this group of people desperate to be pseudo towering personalities themselves.

In other words, as long as the Malays still profess such a heinous culture, it will be, difficult to see any towering personalities emerging from among them.

If there is one, it would be short-lived because so many are anxious to tear him/her to bits.

Similarly, any potential towering personality spotted will be regarded as a threat, and given the same treatment.

The irony, though, abhorrent as it is, is that these strategies seem to work often enough, as perceived from the impassioned plea made by the Prime Minister recently.

Because of a fragmented Malay society, the rules seem set that if "1 can't have it, no one should" — at least 'not from among the Malays, that is.

So at an early stage of the game many potential towering personalities who are usually more principled and strong-minded are weeded out.

It follows, then, that unless one is politically connected and correct, it is difficult to be a towering personality.

This can be seen from the many professionals and academics who are recognised by the international community as towering personalities, but are simply ignored in their-own country.

Some are even cast aside as enemies, and considered dangerous. Some are put into cold storage.

While admittedly there is no simple and quick way to solve this entrenched problem, it is quite clear that the major obstacle is the myopic attitudinal negative, traits of the Malays which are taking a toll on their collective future.

The sooner this is realised and discarded, the sooner will the Malays blossom as towering personalities, as many of them did in the pro-independence era when they were proud of their achievements as a unified people.

Thus, first, the division in the Malay community must be immediately healed, for the healing process alone will produce many towering personalities.

But again is there a towering personality who would want to take the first step?

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